

## Purple Heart

The Purple Heart is a distinguished military decoration awarded in the name of the President to those who have been wounded or killed while serving in the U.S. armed forces. Eligibility for a Purple Heart applies to service members who suffered a wound: 1) As the direct or indirect result of enemy action, and 2) The wound required treatment by a medical officer at the time of the injury.

### Changes to Eligibility (MARADMIN 245/11)

At the start of the war on terrorism, the Marine Corps awarded the Purple Heart only for instances of mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI) /concussion where the Marine initially suffered an observed loss of consciousness of any duration. The Marine Corps revised the Purple Heart criteria for MTBI in April 2011. For concussive events caused by enemy action that occur on or after the start of the war on terrorism, award of the Purple Heart is authorized when:

1. The Marine suffers a loss of consciousness of any duration as a result of a diagnosed MTBI /concussion, or
2. When the persistent signs, symptoms, or findings of functional impairment from a diagnosed MTBI/concussion result in a medical officer finding of “not fit for full duty” for a period greater than 48 hours (does not include assignment to administrative light duty for the sole reason of screening) within seven days of the concussive event.

#### Wounds/injuries that have historically warranted award of the Purple Heart:

- Gunshot/ fragmentation wounds
- Lacerations/ fractures
- Perforated eardrum
- MTBI /concussions severe enough to cause either loss of consciousness or “not fit for full duty” for a period of

more than 48 hours

- Moderate or severe/penetrating traumatic brain injuries
- Smoke inhalation severe enough to cause first to third degree burns to the respiratory tract
- Corneal abrasions
- Effects of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons (to include chlorine gas used in an IED)
- Second and third degree burns

#### The following types of wounds/injuries have historically not warranted the Purple Heart:

- Cold and heat related injuries (e.g., frostbite and heatstroke)
- Hearing loss and tinnitus (i.e., ringing in the ears)
- MTBI/concussions that do not either cause loss of consciousness or disposition by a medical officer of “not fit for full duty” for a period greater than 48 hours from the time of the concussive incident due to persistent signs, symptoms, or findings of functional impairment.
- Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or combat stress injuries

- Disease (unless caused by enemy biological agents)
- Abrasions (unless of a severity to be incapacitating)
- Bruises (unless caused by direct impact of enemy weapon and of a severity to require treatment by a medical officer)
- First degree burns
- Soft tissue injuries (e.g., ligament/tendon/muscle strains or sprains)
- Any wounds/injuries received as a result of friendly fire when the Marine was not engaging the enemy at the time of the injury

**For help gathering the appropriate documentation and submitting a reconsideration request, contact the Sergeant Merlin German Wounded Warrior Call Center.**

**Wounded Warrior Call Center 24/7—1.877.487.6299**

**Stay Connected—[www.woundedwarriors.marines.mil](http://www.woundedwarriors.marines.mil)**



# Reconsideration for Purple Heart

**There are two instances when a Marine may request reconsideration for the Purple Heart Award:**

- 1. New and relevant information is available that was not originally considered, or**
- 2. Documentation that the Marine met the revised Purple Heart criteria for MTBI/Concussion for concussive events occurring on or after the start of the war on terrorism.**

## **Based on new information or evidence:**

Active duty, reserve, and veteran Marines wounded or injured while participating in combat operations under circumstances where the Purple Heart was not approved may request a reconsideration if new and relevant information is provided that was not originally considered. Requests should be submitted via the Marine's operational chain of command at the time of the wound or injury and should contain:



- 1. A letter requesting reconsideration based on new information**
- 2. A copy of all documentation originally considered**
- 3. Copies of any new and relevant information, or at least two notarized statements from eyewitnesses to the wound or injury**
- 4. Endorsement by each commander in the original operational chain of command up to the battalion/squadron commander**

## **Based on revised criteria for MTBI/concussion:**

Active duty, Reserve, and veteran Marines wounded or injured with a MTBI/concussion while participating in combat operations after 11 Sept 2001 may request reconsideration if their medical record indicates that they suffered from loss of consciousness for any length of time or the persistent signs, symptoms, or findings of functional impairment from a diagnosed MTBI/concussion result in a medical officer finding of "not fit for full duty" for a period greater than 48 hours. Requests should be submitted via the Marine's operational chain of command at the time of the wound or injury and should contain:

- 1. A letter requesting reconsideration based the revised criteria**
- 2. A certified copy of the Marine's medical records containing documentation that the Marine was diagnosed by a medical officer with MTBI/concussion and**
  - a. Suffered a loss of consciousness of any duration, or**
  - b. Found "not fit for full duty" for a period greater than 48 hours based on the signs, symptoms or findings of functional impairment (must have been documented in the record within the first seven days following the incident)**
- 3. Endorsement by each level of the original operational chain of command up to the battalion/squadron commander**
- 4. The Marine's e-mail address**

## **Purple Heart History**

The Purple Heart was originally designated by General George Washington as the Badge of Military Merit on August 7, 1782. It was reinstated by the President of the United States in 1932 on General Washington's 200th birthday. There are only three known presentations of the original award, prior to reinstatement in 1932. The award evolved over time to recognize those who are wounded in enemy action. The Purple Heart maintains the basic design developed by General Washington, but now bears his profile.

## **Related Fact Sheets**

- SGLI / VGLI
- TRICARE
- Combat Related Special Compensation
- Retirement Checklist